

## HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOMS (HAB) SEASON

Algae blooms begin in May and can occur through October or later. Reports mostly coincide with the longest periods of light and warmest water temperatures, and typically flourish in nutrient loaded water bodies. Three holiday weekends when public waters are most used fall in times when HAB are likely to occur:

- Memorial Day
- Independence day
- Labor Day

In 2011 Kansas experienced a number of HAB involving 38 reported water bodies. There were one suspect, five probable and seven confirmed cases of human illness from HAB.

Animals (pets and livestock) that swim in or drink water affected by HAB or eat dried algae along beaches are seriously affected. In 2011, there were five confirmed dog deaths, one suspect and one confirmed dog illness due to HAB.

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Our Mission:  
To protect and improve the health  
and environment of all Kansans.



To receive additional information visit  
Kansas Environmental Health and "LIKE" us.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION ON KANSAS EPHT PROGRAM VISIT:

[HTTP://WWW.KDHEKS.GOV/BEH/ENV\\_PUB\\_HEALTH\\_TRACK.HTM](http://www.kdheks.gov/beh/env_pub_health_track.htm)

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON OUR NATIONAL PARTNER EPHT  
PROGRAM AT THE CDC,

VISIT: [WWW.CDC.GOV/NCEH/TRACKING](http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/tracking)

## VETERINARIAN'S GUIDE TO HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOM (HAB)



## WHAT ARE HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOMS?

Cyanobacteria or blue-green algae are bacteria that grow in water and are photosynthetic. They are usually too small to be seen, but sometimes can form colonies. Blooms occur in fresh water when the bacteria grow exuberantly and produce toxins that cause acute illness and death in animals when swallowed. Animals can be exposed to toxins while wading, playing, swallowing affected water, or inhaling water droplets while enjoying high-speed activities like boating.

Some cyanobacterial blooms can look like foam or scum on the surface of fresh water lakes and ponds. The blooms can be blue, green, brown or red and may look like paint floating on the water. Animal safety posters are available upon request. Please contact Shelley Bearman by email at [sbearman@kdheks.gov](mailto:sbearman@kdheks.gov).

## ROLE OF THE KANSAS DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

KDHE does not routinely monitor all water bodies in the state, instead responds to complaint forms submitted using the online database. Based on test results of water samples, KDHE makes recommendations to the lake managers. In rare cases where HAB represent an extreme threat to the health of the public, KDHE may recommend the closure of a lake.

## VETERINARIANS CAN

**Educate clients:** Know where to go to find out about current advisories: [www.kdheks.gov/algae-illness/algae\\_advisories.htm](http://www.kdheks.gov/algae-illness/algae_advisories.htm)

### Know the signs of animal illness:

Vomiting	Difficulty Breathing
Diarrhea	General Weakness
Lethargy	Convulsions
Jaundice	High Liver Enzymes
Seizure	Respiratory Paralysis

### Report all illness/deaths:

The online reporting form is located on [www.kdhe.gov](http://www.kdhe.gov). Click on the Harmful Algal Bloom button, click on Animal Algae Illness Reporting Form. Veterinarians may also call the Epi Hotline: 877-427-7317

## PRIVATE WATER BODIES

Water samples for blue-green algae identification of suspected blue-green algae can be submitted to the Kansas State Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory for a small fee. When collecting a water sample, the laboratory recommends using gloves to prevent skin contact. Collect about 20 fluid ounces (500 ml) in a clean, leak-proof container, and include any visible scum. Keep the sample refrigerated (not frozen). Samples should be shipped to the laboratory in an insulated box with a cold pack. For more information, please contact the Kansas State Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory at 866-512-5650.

## REPORTING ANIMAL ILLNESS

Please use the online Animal Illness Reporting Form to report an animal illness or death that may be related to exposure to blue-green algae. Questions about this form? Please call KDHE - Bureau of Epidemiology and Public Health Informatics at 877-427-7317 or email [epihotline@kdheks.gov](mailto:epihotline@kdheks.gov).

## HAB AND HEALTH IMPACTS

The first signs of Mycrocystis hepatotoxin poisoning in animals usually occurs within 30 minutes of exposure and include vomiting and diarrhea. This is followed by progressively worsening signs of liver failure such as anorexia, lethargy and depression. Blood values of liver enzymes are typically high. Jaundice, abdominal swelling and tenderness in the abdominal area may also be observed. Dogs should not be allowed near the shore where decaying algae may be visible as the algae may stick to their feet. Should dogs lick their paws, they could ingest enough toxin to cause death. Horses, cattle and donkeys are also susceptible to toxins and should not drink water from ponds or lakes with cyanobacteria.

